

Editorial

Homo Dialogicus: Philosophical Investigations

Human beings are social beings and dialogue in all its forms is fundamental to human life and well being. Co-reflection, conversation and collaboration are fundamental forms of human lives and means to live in harmony. Dialogue is not borne of a particular act of will; it is part of human nature. It is not just that we have, besides other faculties and skills, also the one of dialogue; it is dialogue that makes a being a human being, and contributes to better personalisation and socialization.

Philosophical investigations by its very nature investigate reality from a human point of view. Though the purpose of philosophy is often declared to know the reality as it is, it is philosophical wisdom and humility to admit that it could be known only from human points of views. Perhaps taking into account this fact, philosophical tradition always gave priority to an investigation of human existence and nature. Know thyself is still considered to be a primary philosophical enterprise. With the success of science and technology there is a tendency to overvalue objectively verifiable information as truth and to treat the rest as opinions and beliefs, not befitting to the rational beings. The power to believe, however, is important for our survival and well being. Though we cannot be indifferent to whether what we believe is true or not, we cannot also live only by personally verified truths. It is again philosophical wisdom, therefore, to accept the fact that probability is the guide of our lives. Beliefs are as important as verified truths in our lives; we live both by beliefs and verified truths. We learn from trustworthy people and from our personal experiences. In our efforts to make meanings for our lives probable arguments are at least as important as demonstrative arguments. Know thyself is also the fruit of co-reflection, conversation and collaboration.

Search for truth often began with the question: "What is it?" Seekers of truth wanted to know the things as they are in themselves, independent of the knowing subjects. Later as our knowledge of realities changed, philosophical investigations

modified their quest with the question: "What do I/we know?" There is a recognition that what we call objective is also subject to subjective faculties of knowledge and physical conditions of the environment. In modern philosophy, metaphysical questions increasingly gave way to epistemological questions. Philosophical investigations took a semantic turn, during the contemporary period, as questions regarding reality were taken over by physical sciences and epistemological questions became the subject matter of neurological and cognitive sciences. Scientific inquiries were taken to be as the only meaningful pursuit of truth and philosophy to be as a search for meaning, with the basic question: "What do I/mean?" In this regard, philosophical investigations are semantic in nature and semantics exhausts metaphysics.

As we learn from personal experiences and experiences of trustworthy people, dialogue is the fundamental form of human communication and collaboration, and many texts from antiquity were written in dialogues. The dialogical literary form is seen in the religious scriptures like Vedas, Bible, Buddhist sutras, and Confucian texts. Plato used it in his *Dialogues* with Socrates as the main character, talking through concepts that all seem to be knowing but in fact needs clearer understanding and concise articulation. Socrates considered himself as a midwife, helping the dialogue partners to deliver the baby, the truth, making use of *aporia*, *elenchus* and *dialectics* in his dialogue. This goes with the etymological meaning of the term dialogue, from Greek *διά* - *diá*, through + *λόγος* - *logos*, word, speech. This was presented different from certain other philosophical and political discourses that were given more in rhetoric and sophistry, where winning arguments was more important than serving truth. Dialogue involves listening and understanding, and persuasive arguments were given in a certain atmosphere of openness, friendship and mutual respect. This is in tune with the empirical and logical fact that human beings are social in nature and we belong to a community, even when we are not surrounded by human beings physically. Dialogue often does

not have a definite conclusion, a final statement of the issue; it is an ongoing process.

The literary genre of dialogue was used by other philosophers, early Christian writers like Justin, Origen and Augustine, and later by scholastic philosophers like Peter Abelard, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas. In the modern period, Malebranche, Berkeley and Hume also used Dialogues for their philosophical enquiries. Martin Buber, in the contemporary period, argued for the dialogical and relational nature of human existence. Mikhail Bakhtin widened the scope of dialogue, taking into account multiple perspectives and possibilities. Dialogue provides a platform for people to express their views on difficult topics and to explore ways and means to make positive changes in life and society. Often dialogue brings better shared understanding even when problems are not solved by decisions and judgements. Dialogue builds trust, the fundamental ingredient for human life to flourish. Human conversations and relationships are neither purely linguistic or logical, though we are unable to live together without language and logic. Human life needs language and logic, but it is not exhausted by language and logic. In contemporary philosophy Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Derrida, Habermas, Apel, etc. pointed to the importance of dialogue and practiced it for philosophical investigations. This issue of *Journal of Dharma* on “Dialogue and Philosophy” explores some of the philosophers who investigated the phenomenon of dialogue and or who used the philosophical genre of dialogue for philosophical investigations.

David Hume’s philosophy has invited often a lot of criticism because of its abstruse style and therefore earned very strong criticism from all the corners. In spite of the fact that he is often accused of sophism, inconsistency and contradictions his arguments are demanding and provoking and philosophers like Immanuel Kant acknowledges that “I freely admit that the remembrance of David Hume was the very thing that many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave a completely different direction to my researches in the field of

speculative philosophy.”¹ “Dialogue and Conversation: Humean Way of Doing Philosophy” by Jose Mariadas argues that a rereading of Hume’s philosophy is worth doing because the traditional understanding fails to explore the rich possibilities of Humean philosophy. It is argued that without analysing his concepts of philosophy, truth and method of doing philosophy we cannot do justice to Hume’s philosophy. This paper tries to show that Hume’s concept of dialogical and conversational style of truth seeking is something very relevant, unique and promising.

Napoleon M. Mabaquiao, Jr. In his paper “The *Is* and Moral *Ought* of Intersubjectivity” analyzes the possibility and moral normativity of *intersubjectivity* — here understood as referring to the kind of human interaction that respects the personhood of human beings. The analysis of the possibility of intersubjectivity inquires into the conditions of its occurrence; while the analysis of its moral normativity examines the basis of its status as a moral obligation. The paper advances two points. The first is the distinction between *theoretical intersubjectivity*, where persons are perceived or conceived as *subjects* and not as *objects*, and *practical intersubjectivity*, where persons are treated as *ends* and not merely as *means*. The second is the clarification that the imperativity of theoretical intersubjectivity (for involving perceptions and beliefs about persons) is epistemic while that of practical intersubjectivity (for involving intentions and actions towards persons) is moral. Given these points and the questionable status of the possibility of theoretical intersubjectivity (for requiring a nonconceptual knowledge of persons), confusing the latter with practical intersubjectivity would render the morality of intersubjectivity problematic.

“Between Pluralism and Consensus: A Habermasian Project of Dialogue in Public Sphere” by Nishant A. Irudayadason, through an analysis of the political philosophy of Habermas—particularly of his idea of dialogue in public sphere, seeks to show

¹Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987, 8.

that this “agonistic dynamic of politics” should be situated between consensus and pluralism. Consensus, however necessary to ward off the danger of relativism, can endanger political otherness. Political space is constitutively marked by a kind of irreducible heterogeneity. Hence democratic society needs to be situated in the ambiguous gap between the procedural rules of communication leading to consensus and the ever-possible dissent that cannot be strangled. Democracy is constantly confronted by uncertainty and the heterogeneity of individual interests and ends. There is, in the heart of all true democracy, rebellion to one unified system. This irreducible otherness is the foundation of democratic pluralism, source of social conflicts and political crises.

Habermas and Apel tried to give Ethics a philosophical justification by analyzing the way we realize discourses. A discourse is a special kind of a dialogue or, more generally, communication. Habermas’ and Apel’s contributions profoundly influenced German philosophy and jurisprudence. Yet, Ernst Tugendhat, a friend of Habermas, very soon pronounced the objection, that the procedure of Habermas and Apel was circular: Their definition and description of “discourse” relied implicitly to the main ethical rules, and therefore these rules can easily be recognized by analyzing the settings (or structure) of a discourse. In the article, “Dialogue and Ethics: Can the Study of Dialogue Teach Us Something about Ethics?” Thomas Kesselring shows that Tugendhat’s objection is valid, but nevertheless Habermas’ and Apel’s discourse philosophies remain inspiring for everyone interested in giving Ethics a solid foundation. I will argue, however, that the central pillar of this foundation is not discourse itself, but a particular kind of co-operation (“qualified cooperation”), of which discourse is an example. The main step in my argumentation consists in showing that different kinds of communication – discourse, negotiation, debate – correspond closely to different kinds of human interaction, of which “qualified co-operation” is the basic one.

Siddhartha attempts to highlight issues related to socially engaged Buddhism, drawing from a variety of schools in his

article, "Interbeing: Self, Others, Buddha Nature and the Evolving Universe." Both non-dual approaches like Jonang and popular devotional ones like Pureland are considered. Aspects of Buddhism from the personal, social and ecological dimensions are examined drawing from the work of theologians and practitioners like David Loy, Thich Nhat Hanh, Thanissaro Bhikku, Steven Batchelor, Buddhadasa Bhikku, Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry.

I am happy to present these philosophical investigations on dialogue and dialogical investigations on being human and our inter-subjective and social nature in this issue of *Journal of Dharma* on "Dialogue and Philosophy" for your perusal and pleasure.

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